

ACOLYTES AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH
A CUSTOMARY (A.K.A. CHECKLIST)

Purpose

Acolyte is just a fancy word that means “server” but the Acolyte’s role is one of the most important ministries in the worship service. As an Acolyte you have two main roles:

1. **Assisting the clergy** in carrying out the worship service.
2. **Being an example for the congregation** so the people know when to stand, when to sit, etc.

Checklist

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early and check in with the Verger.**
- Vest** – choose an alb that comes to your ankles and fits in the shoulders and put it on. If you need help finding an alb that fits or tying the cincture, ask one of the clergy.

If there is one acolyte:

- Make sure the cross is in its stand at the back of the auditorium.
- Make sure Gospel Book is on the altar (centered at the front).
- Make sure there is a bulletin in your seat (acolytes sit in the chairs to the right as you face the altar).
- No later than five minutes before the service, light the candles on the altar. First light the Epistle Candle (on your right as you approach the altar), then the Gospel candle (on the left).
- Ask clergy on which hymn verse to start processing with the cross (usually 2nd, sometimes 1st).
- Join the clergy for prayer before the service begins.
- Lead the procession carrying the cross. Pause briefly in front of the altar (don’t bow), then go around to the right and place the cross in stand, then go stand in front of your seat until the end of the hymn.
- When the Gospel hymn is being sung, look for celebrant to nod, then walk to the altar, pick up the Gospel Book (hold it upright at chest level with cross on cover facing forward), then turn and process about a third of the way down the aisle. Turn and wait. The clergy will open book and announce the Gospel. Hold the book for the clergy while he/she reads.
- After reading the Gospel, the clergy will hand the book back to you and step aside for you to lead the way back to the altar. Walk directly to the altar, place book back on the altar, and take your seat.
- At the offertory, move with the clergy to the area behind the altar. Bring the offering plates forward and prepare to hand them to the ushers. As the clergy receives the gifts of bread and wine from the ushers, hand them the offering plates.
- The clergy will hand you the Gospel book, communion veil and bourse. Take them and place them on the credence table.
- Bring forward the water cruet and the intinction cup from the credence table and hand them to the clergy. Wait while the clergy pours the wine and water into each cup.
- When the clergy is finished setting the table, carry the wine and water cruets back to the credence table, along with any extra bread.
- During the offertory hymn, wash the celebrant’s hands. Stand by the credence table. Let the celebrant come to you. Hold the lavabo (water bowl) in your left hand, place lavabo towel over your left wrist, cross out, pick up water cruet in your right hand (reverse if left-handed), and pour a small amount of water over the priest’s fingers. After the priest has dried his/her hands, the priest returns the towel to your wrist. Return everything back to credence table, and take your seat until the offertory hymn ends.

- When the offertory hymn ends, stand with the celebrant and deacon at the altar (on the right side facing the celebrant).
- Receive communion with the rest of the altar party, then return to your seat.
- After communion, but before the post-communion prayer, assist the clergy in clearing the altar. Take all items off the altar and place them on the credence table.
- After the post-communion prayer and blessing, pick up the cross. At the first verse of the post communion hymn, walk directly to the center aisle and pause briefly before the first row of chairs. Do not turn to face the altar, bow, or look over your shoulder for the rest of the altar party. It is their job to follow you.
- After pausing briefly, lead the procession down the aisle to the back of the auditorium.
- After the dismissal, when the center aisle is clear, return to the altar to extinguish the candles. First, extinguish the Gospel candle (on the left as you face the altar), then the Epistle candle (on the right as you face the altar).
- Finally, exit the auditorium with dignity and hang up your alb and cincture.

If there are two acolytes:

- The second acolyte serves as the Gospel Bearer. If you are the second acolyte, make sure that the Gospel Book is at the back of the auditorium before the service starts. When the service starts, carry the Gospel Book in procession behind the crucifer and place it on the altar (front and center).
- During the Gospel hymn, pick up the Gospel Book and process a third of the way down the aisle for the reading of the Gospel.
- During communion, remain in your seat until the doxology is being sung and the offering is being brought forward. Then move to stand at the horn of the altar (the left hand side as you face the people) for the Eucharistic prayer. After receiving communion, return to your seat.
- After the final blessing, at the beginning of the post-communion hymn, pick up the Gospel book from the credence table and follow the crucifer (the first acolyte) to the back of the auditorium.

A Note about Decorum

The two most visible roles in the service are those of clergy and those of acolytes, especially at our new location, where your seat is entirely in the open. So make sure you are always setting a good example: sit up straight, keep your voice down to a whisper, and don't fidget (the rector knows this last one is hard... he tends to fidget, too).

ACOLYTES ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR WORSHIP MINISTRY.
MANY THANKS FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.